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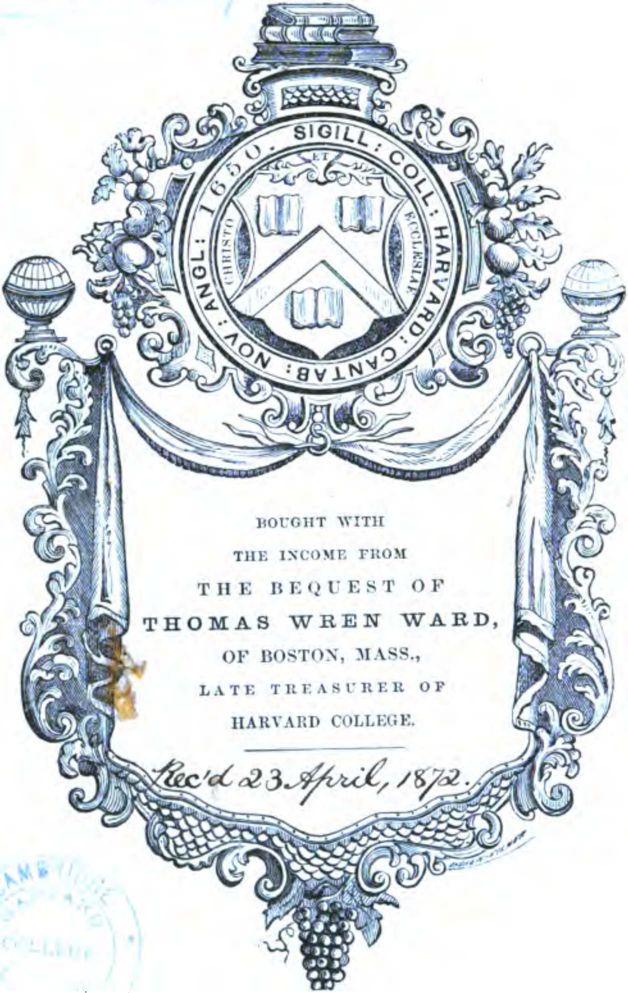

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THE SPEAKING VOICE

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THE CULTIVATION

OF THE

SPEAKING VOICE

BY

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Oxford
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PREFACE.

'THE Cultivation of the Speaking Voice' is the subject of two articles which, under that title, appeared in *The Contemporary Review* for March and July, 1869. It was suggested to the writer that, with some alterations and additions—especially more precise directions for carrying his theories into practice—they would form a Manual likely to be useful to many, and not unfit for admission into the Art Series of *The Clarendon Press*. By the kind permission of Messrs. Strahan, these articles have become a book, which is now laid before the reader.

With this, the following pages might have been left to speak for themselves, had not some of the processes recommended in them been so new—or so old—as to justify the writer in declaring again (he will be found to have done so already more than once) that he has never for a moment lost sight of the object to which he believes they will be found conducive—the 'formation' of the *speaking* voice; and that his frequent reference to the *singing* voice has been inseparable from the mode of treatment he has adopted. Any musical knowledge or skill the student who proposes to give these processes a fair trial may possess will of course increase his chances of turning them to good account. The trained voice and ear will assuredly prove more apt than the untrained, even in an altogether novel application of their powers. At the same time, the musical preparation absolutely needed for this trial is the smallest conceivable—amounting to little more than a knowledge of the names and places, on some musical instrument, of three or four notes, and skill enough to imitate these (in pitch) with his voice.

Something, perhaps, should be added to what is said (in p. 32) about the time of life at which vocal discipline, of whatever kind, is likely to be most, or at all, efficacious. Obviously it may be undertaken, not only too late, but too early. Experience seems to show that such discipline applied to the puerile *singing* voice is generally useless and often mischievous: useless in its bearing on the *second* voice which comes only with early manhood—a *new* instrument; and mischievous, if at all excessive, in diminishing the chances of that voice being large or agreeable. The cultivation of the speaking, like that of the singing, voice should not be begun till the time when the *adult* voice (of man or woman) *begins* to form—at ages, varying in different cases, from fifteen to eighteen.

The Tables at the end of this volume present most, if not all, the monosyllabic combinations of the English alphabet, classified according to their principal vowels, and consonants or combinations of consonants, initial or final. They have been drawn up with two objects: (1) as materials for the exercise of the voice; (2) as a means whereby the student may ascertain those combinations his utterance of which is imperfect or attended with difficulty. Unless he be very exceptionally constituted, or have been still more exceptionally trained, he will be astonished at the number of these—supposing his ear to be sufficiently delicate to detect them. Should he find the recitation of these isolated sounds tiresome or ludicrous, he must remember that all preparatory exercises, mental even as well as physical, are apt to appear so; partly, no doubt, because practice is wasted excepting on what we can yet do only imperfectly. It would of course be more amusing to recite connected than unconnected words, as it is more amusing to sing passages than single notes; but as assuredly no singing voice ever yet was formed by the exclusive utterance of anything that could be called music, so no speaking voice will ever yet be formed by the exclusive utterance of anything that can be called literature.

LONDON, *April*, 1870.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

IT is generally admitted that the Anglo-Saxon race, now the majority of the population of Great Britain, are less gifted vocally—have the vocal apparatus naturally in less perfection, and artificially in worse order—than any other variety of Indo-Europeans. As a rule, the English voice, if not always of inferior quality, is almost always in intensity or capacity inferior to (for instance) the Italian, the German, or the Welsh. The number of English speakers who can, without too evident effort and for any length of time, fill our largest interiors, or make themselves audible and intelligible at an open-air meeting, is as small as the number of English singers who can hold their own against a modern orchestra, or make their presence felt in every part of the Crystal Palace transept.

The English voice.

This incapacity is, however, of limited importance. Few speakers are ever called upon to fill our largest interiors, and addressing an open-air meeting is happily a very exceptional duty. What really concerns us all is that, under ordinary conditions, in rooms of moderate size, in presence of very small audiences, nay, in

Average English utterance.

The English language

common conversation, no people give expression to their thoughts—i.e. *utter*, not choose, their words—so imperfectly and with such an absence of charm as our countrymen. To the foreign and unaccustomed ear the English language sounds, as to the foreign eye the Welsh language looks, made up of consonants, and these hardly distinguishable from one another. As a rule, our speech is wanting both in resonance and distinctness. We reduce to a minimum the sonority of our vowels, and omit or amalgamate with one another half of our consonants. Incompetent readers, slovenly speakers, and illiterate singers are of course ready at all times to shift the responsibility for these shortcomings from themselves to the language which they habitually disfigure or misrepresent. The tools of bad workmen are proverbially in fault—blunt, crooked, cracked, infirm—every way inefficient.

not in fault.

A careful and impartial comparison of modern European languages must inevitably result in the conviction that, in sonority, only one surpasses, and only two or three equal, our own. Certain it is, that from the most sonorous of these—the Italian—it is possible to compress into an intelligible sentence many very uncouth vocables[1], especially when he who uses them knows the value of 'harsh din' as a set-off to euphony; while, on the other hand, English passages without number might be collected, especially from our sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets, which for euphony—with which alone we have now to do—it would be hard to equal, and impossible to surpass, in any other living tongue.

---

[1] For instance:—

'E se la scure mai tronca gli sterpi
Suona la selva al sibilar dei serpi.'
La Pia, Leggenda Romantica di B. Sestini, c. i. s. iv.

'Elocution masters,' past and present.

A good deal of this has been said—said again and again, and very forcibly—before. Without taking into account the professional 'elocution master' of other days, whose labours, it is to be feared, have on the whole thrown discredit on the art he professed, more than one educated Englishman has of late been devoting especial attention to the art of uttering the English language[1], and is now by precept and example, by public lecture and private lesson, calling attention to their countrymen's shortcomings, and no doubt doing much to lessen their number and intensity.

Neglect of first principles.

It would seem however that these gentlemen—wisely perhaps in reference to an art so new that thousands have not so much as heard of its existence[2], and would question its utility if they had—direct the attention of their pupils rather to details than first principles, rather to what goes to make up style in delivery—emphasis, articulation, pace, and the like—than to what underlies all these, the formation and management of the voice.

---

[1] In no one of the Universities of England, Ireland or Scotland is this art systematically taught. A chair of 'Public Reading' was established some years since in connection with the 'Theological Department' of King's College, London.

[2] 'To read and to write,' says Dogberry, 'comes by Nature,'—so, by parity of reasoning, does *to speak*.

This will be best illustrated and explained by reference to a kindred art—the art of singing.

Singing:

Singing, in its highest perfection, involves a combination of gifts and accomplishments the rarity of which is best expressed in the fact that no epoch can be named in which all Europe combined could have furnished examples of more than half a dozen contemporary great singers. The gifts needed for a singer may be briefly specified as voice, ear and sensibility; the accomplishments, as those which go generally to make what is called a good musician. Over and above these, sometimes even all but making amends for the want of any or all of them, the singer needs skill in an art altogether especial—that of 'playing on the voice.' It would seem to be commonly supposed, even among musicians, that to make a singer nothing is required but to bring musical knowledge to bear on voice and ear. 'If I had that man's voice!' is an aspiration which has been expressed by many an instrumental performer in respect to many a well-endowed but incomplete vocalist; the aspiration implying of course that, having it, he would then and there give expression through the coveted organ to such musical power as he

how a special art.

knows himself to be possessed of. The vocalist might as reasonably exclaim 'Had I only that man's fiddle!' He never does say so, because his wish could easily be gratified, and his skill in using his new possession tried,—everybody knows with what result. The most accomplished of instrumentalists, nay, the most learned and inventive of composers, could he be suddenly endowed with the most sonorous, sweet, extensive and flexible of voices, would find that he had much to do before he could use it effectively. He would start with even less than the usual advantage which a skilful performer on one artificial instrument has in taking up another. For the vocalist has not only to learn to play on his instrument, he has, to a certain extent, to 'make' it; or, if this expression seem to imply too much, he has to smooth its inequalities, develope its intensity, extend or, it may be, reduce its compass, qualify it to endure long continued exertion; in a word, bring it into perfect subjection to his will, and make it really a part of himself—an organ for the expression of all that is within him.

'Formation' of the voice.

To the discipline by which alone this result is to be attained, the artists of the golden age of song, the last century, submitted themselves, as a matter of course, during a period of from three to six years[1]. Among our contempo-

Vocal discipline in the last century.

---

[1] Witness the well-known and well-authenticated story of Caffarelli (1703-83) whose practice was restricted to a selection

raries this discipline has generally been less severe and of shorter duration. The art of the singer dies with him, and a satisfactory comparison between past and present vocal practitioners cannot be made. One advantage, however, it is certain the former had over the latter: their careers, on the average, like their apprenticeships, lasted much longer.

Want of special training for the speaker.

If the preparatory training which, it might seem obviously, the singer's art demands is often partially, sometimes even wholly, neglected, we need not wonder that all training akin to it, in relation to the speaker's—apparently so much more easy, so much more 'natural'—should be not only entirely neglected, but hardly even recognised as at all necessary. The singer of to-day is often the product of only a few months' special training,—not infrequently exceeded in brevity by his career. Still, the most audacious of musical 'crammers' does not venture to dispense with a certain amount, however small, of instruction in the properties of the instrument the use of which he professes to teach. Traditions—fast fading traditions—of the practices of the Gasparinis, Redis, Pistocchis and Porporas, of old, in respect to the 'formation of the voice,' still hang, however loosely, about

of passages written on one sheet of music-paper, for five out of the six years during which he was under the instruction of Porpora. Dr. Burney met Caffarelli at Naples in 1770. Though he had quitted the stage he still sang in public occasionally—at the age of 67.

our music schools, and even the crammer cannot venture to ignore them. The speaker only can venture to perform in the presence of the public on an instrument of whose structure he knows nothing, and to whose capabilities he has never given a moment's consideration. No discipline analogous to that applied to the singing voice has ever been generally adopted among us for the speaking voice, if, indeed, any has ever been prescribed: nor—this at least is certain—is the necessity for any such discipline at all generally admitted. It is the object of this essay to show, not only that it is necessary, but that it is practicable.

CHAPTER II.

THE HUMAN VOICE.

Musical sound.

MUSICAL sound is the result of periodic, *isochronous* or equal-toned vibrations of the atmosphere—vibrations following one another at an appreciable pace. Sounds whose constituent vibrations are irregular in their succession, and whose pace therefore is inappreciable, are mere noise. All musical sounds are not equally agreeable to the ear. Besides *pitch*, *intensity* and *duration*, sound has a fourth property, technically called *timbre*, popularly *quality*. It is by its *timbre* that we distinguish musical instruments of the same or similar compass from one another; e. g. the clarionet from the concertina, the oboe from the flute. Individual musical instruments, even of the same kind, are often easily identified by their *timbre* exclusively; and (which is more remarkable) the *timbre* of the same instrument, touched or inflated by different performers, will often vary very sensibly. *Vice versâ*, it is possible to imitate very closely the *timbre* of one instrument on another of a different class. Still, on the whole, there is a strong family likeness among instruments of the same class, and considerable unlikeness

Timbre.

among those of different classes. A practised ear would be as little likely to mistake a *cornet-à-piston* for a trumpet as a practised palate Chateau Margaux for Chambertin; though both the instruments and both the wines have many points in common. Still less would it be possible to mistake any artificial instrument for the human voice. Every attempt at imitating the latter by the former has hitherto resulted rather in caricature than in imitation. The so-called *vox humana* stop, for instance, in the Haarlem and some other organs, about which ignorant tourists are wont to rave, might certainly be mistaken, for a moment, by an inattentive or undiscriminating listener, for a voice —the voice of a very aged female, more ready than skilful in its exercise. The *vox humana* of the Divine Artificer is an incomparably more complex, as it is an incomparably more beautiful, instrument than any of its compeers. Fearfully and wonderfully is it made. Not only is its mechanism more intricate, not only are its constituent parts more numerous and delicate, than those of any artificial organ, but the action of these is complicated by a condition from which every other instrument is free. To this we shall return presently. For the moment let us briefly review the mechanism of the human voice.

The human voice inimitable.

The vocal mechanism.

'The vocal mechanism,' says Professor Willis[1], may be considered as consisting of *lungs* or *bellows,* capable of transmitting, by means of the connecting *windpipe,* a current of air through an apparatus contained in the upper part of the windpipe, which is termed the *larynx.* This apparatus is capable of producing various musical (and other) sounds, which are heard after passing through a *variable cavity* consisting of the *pharynx* (the cavity behind the tongue) *mouth* and *nose.*'

---

[1] Transactions of the Cambridge Philosophical Society, No. 12.

Variable
cavity.

Larynx.

Windpipe.

Lungs or
Bellows.

The lungs.

To the capacity and healthy state of the *lungs* is mainly due the intensity or force of a voice,—not its *volume,* which depends rather on the capacity and form of the pharynx; nor its power of spreading over great space and penetrating obstructions, which depends on method of delivery or 'production;' but that effect on the ear which results from the *extent of the vibrations* caused by its action. The strength of the lungs may, it is certain, be very considerably increased by careful and judicious exercise; and (which more immediately concerns us) their action may be made more effective and easy by method; in familiar language, by taking breath properly and at proper intervals of time.

The windpipe.

Of the *windpipe,* which connects the lungs with the larynx, little need be said. Unless it assume some abnormal and unhealthy condition, we are generally unconscious of its action, and might easily be unaware even of its existence.

The larynx.

The *larynx* may be briefly described as a cartilaginous box, the encompassing parts or walls of which (susceptible of very various, though not very extensive, motion) regulate the tension of certain ligaments, called the 'vocal cords,' which, under the influence of the breath, are the immediate causes of 'the voice.' It is possible that these vocal cords may be subject to some action analogous to the 'stopping' of a musical string; but it is more probable that the varieties of pitch in the voice are produced by their contraction and relaxation only. In this case the voice in exercise may be compared to a musical instrument continually under the hand of the tuner[1].

From the difficulty, and till lately the impossibility, of watching it in the living subject, the action of the larynx in the production of sound is still but imperfectly understood. Nor does that which is certainly known about it encourage us to hope that extended knowledge would enable the will to act more directly upon it than it does at present. Not so with the 'variable cavity.'

The variable cavity.

'If,' says Professor Willis, 'the arrangement of the vocal mechanism be artificially imitated by combining together pipes and cavities with bellows, in a similar order, and substituting for the larynx any elastic lamina capable of producing musical sounds when vibrated by the stream of air, it is found that by changing the form of the cavity above it, the various qualities of the human voice in speech may be so nearly imparted to the sound which the imitative larynx is producing, as plainly to show that *there is no necessity for seeking any power of altering the quality of the notes in the larynx itself.* This then may be considered as merely an instrument for producing certain musical notes, which are afterwards to be converted into vowels, liquids, &c., by the proper changes of form in the superior cavity.

---

[1] Detailed expositions of the nature and action of the vocal mechanism abound in physiological works. For a full, clear and concise *resumé* of what is known on the subject, the student is referred to Marshall's Outlines of Physiology, Human and Comparative. London, 1867. Vol. i. pp. 248–272.

Peculiarity of the vocal mechanism.

'We may remark, too, an essential difference between the vocal mechanism and our ordinary musical wind-instruments, which are generally made up of some vibrating mouthpiece to generate the note, and an attached cavity or pipe to govern and augment its tone, each instrument having its peculiar quality; whereas the attached cavity in the vocal machine is capable not only of governing and improving the musical quality of the note, but also of imparting to it all manner of various qualities, the numerous vowels and liquids of speech, and also the perfect mimicry of the peculiar sounds of nearly all animals and musical instruments.'

Thus then we are led to a very satisfactory and encouraging conclusion,—that, of the four properties of a voice—intensity, compass, flexibility, and *timbre*—incomparably the most important, *timbre*, depends not on the lungs, windpipe or larynx—occult organs over which we have little direct control—but almost exclusively on the disposition of that portion of the vocal mechanism which is most open to observation and most obedient to the will. It is to the relative positions of the constituent parts of the 'variable cavity'—the tongue, the uvula, the teeth, and the lips—that we must attribute the different *qualities* we find in different voices, and even, at different times, in the same voices. Of the action of the lungs, the windpipe, and the larynx we can only for the most part judge by the ear; that of a large portion of the variable cavity is open also to the eye. Not only are its results audible; its processes are visible. The speaker or singer has but to place himself in a good light, opposite to a looking-glass, and uttering successively various sounds of speech or song, to *see* what position the relative parts of the variable cavity (the lips, teeth, tongue, uvula, &c.) assume when each is produced; and thereby to ascertain why he utters one with ease, another with difficulty, or fails entirely with a third. When, for example, we emit a sound which strikes the ear as *nasal*, we can not only feel that the ventricles at the back of the veil of the palate are wholly or partially

Timbre dependent on the variable cavity.

Its action visible.

closed, but see the elevation of the back of the tongue which is generally the cause of the closure. So other qualities to which we apply, somewhat vaguely, the epithets *thick*, *thin*, *throaty*, *mouthy*, and the like, are one and all referable to different actions which it would generally be found possible, though often no doubt difficult, to correct partially if not wholly.

CHAPTER III.

SPEECH AND SONG.

Action of the vocal mechanism.

IT has been said[1] that the action of the vocal mechanism is complicated by a condition from which that of every other musical instrument is free. It is this:—

The instrumental performer has merely to *play;* the vocal performer has not merely to play, but to *say*—and both at the same instant. Doubtless thousands of vocal passages exist (not however without their *raison d'être*) the execution of which involves little or no *saying*—passages which are rather played on the larynx than sung by the voice. But these are only examples of the greater including the less. Though the voice is inimitable by any instrument, more than one instrument is imitable by the voice. In the full acceptation of the term, there is no singing without saying: that which is sung must also be said.

Singing includes saying.

Not only so. The converse of this proposition, if not always wholly, is very often approximately, true. There is no saying without (some) singing: that which is effectively and agreeably said must be (partially) sung. 'Est in dicendo etiam quidam cantus obscurior[1].'

---

[1] p. 9.

Musical sound.

Musical sounds are more agreeable to most ears than unmusical. Music is preferable, and generally preferred, to noise. Moreover isochronous vibrations are more extensive in their range than others, and are audible and appreciable at greater distances. In familiar language, music 'travels further' than noise. The recognition of this fact would seem to have been coeval with the infancy, if not the very birth, of oratory. It is attested in the well ascertained practice of antiquity, in the traditions of the Christian Church, and even in the nature-prompted utterance of the street-cryer. The *accentus ecclesiasticus* may or may not be justifiable on æsthetic grounds. There is no occasion to fight its battle on any such. Practical convenience—absolute necessity sometimes—is at hand to account for its origin and justify its long-continued use. The first person who ever attempted to address a very large assembly must have discovered, by the time he had uttered a dozen words, that if what he had to say was to be made not only audible but intelligible to any but those immediately about him, his utterance must be partially musical; and that the more numerous his audience, and the larger his *auditorium*, the more musical must that utterance be. It is purely gratuitous, however, to speculate on what might,

Its advantages.

The 'accentus ecclesiasticus.'

Its utility.

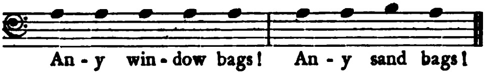
---

[1] Cicero, Orator, c. xviii.

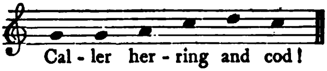
could, would, or should have been the practice of past times, historic, or prehistoric, in this particular. Every factory, every ship, and (more familiar instance) every street will furnish us with examples in plenty of *accentus* and even of *concentus*—of partially and even of perfectly musical utterance. At the beginning of each winter may be heard from end to end of any tolerably quiet London street,—

✓

Street cries.



while no one who has spent a day in Edinburgh, at a certain season of the year, can have failed to catch the ring of the Newhaven



Neither vender of sand-bags nor fish-wife have any intention of commending their wares through the meretricious aid of art; the one has not been encouraged by the probable example of Demosthenes and Æschines, nor does the other know—assuredly she would be shocked to learn—that her song is a rag of Popery. Window-bag man and caller-herring woman want to be heard, as far and as well as possible; and they set about making themselves heard in the easiest and most effective manner.

If it be true then, which few will be found to dispute, that musical is more agreeable than any other kind of sound; also, which is not equally obvious but equally true, that musical is audible over a greater area than any other kind of sound,—it would seem desirable to introduce as much of it as possible into our utterance, whether addressed to few or to many, in small spaces or in large. Indeed, universal assent to this might seem to be implied in the epithet by which, more than by any other, a pleasing voice is characterized. The epithets, *strong*, *sweet*, *clear* (figurative all three) are no doubt familiar to us in connection with voices; as are their opposites, *feeble*, *harsh*, and *husky*. But, by universal consent, the highest tribute to a voice is conveyed in the word *musical*—not used figuratively or analogically, but simply and directly. By a *musical* voice is always meant a voice the very sound of which gives pleasure, altogether irrespective of, or (it may be safer to say) over and above, the sense conveyed by it.

Musical voices.

It would seem then that the sweetness and strength of vocal utterance, as of every other kind of sound, are greater or less as they are more or less musical; and, to advance another step, that words *spoken* fall more or less pleasantly upon the ear, and also spread themselves over a larger area, as they approximate to, or partake of, the character of words *sung*. Yet the two acts of speaking and singing are different acts notwithstanding; they have their different

Speech and song.

uses and their different occasions of use—occasions when it would be most inconvenient and impertinent to interchange them. And unless we keep this in mind we may injure both; rob song of its especial charm, and make speech ridiculous. How is speech to be made more musical without being turned into song?

Their likeness and their unlikeness.

We shall be enabled to answer this question more confidently by-and-bye. As a preliminary, let us ascertain the particulars in which speech and song essentially differ from, as well as resemble, one another.

In speech the voice glides up and down what, by an allowable figure, may be called an *inclined plane:* in song it makes *steps*, the proportions of which to one another are ascertained.

Speech is for the most part heard only during the *passage* of the voice from one sound to another; it is the result of *intervals:* in song intervals are traversed silently, and the voice is heard only on *sounds*—the terms or boundaries of intervals. The variations of pitch in speech may be compared to the effect produced by sliding the finger up and down a vibrating string; those in song to that produced by 'stopping' such a string at certain points, and *at no others.*

Concrete and discrete sounds.

In brief: speech consists almost exclusively of *concrete* sounds; song almost[1] exclusively of *discrete* sounds.

---

[1] The 'portamento' of song (imitable on *bowed* instruments) presents the only instance in which concrete sounds are employed *musically.*

But, as the differences between speech and song are great, so are the resemblances. True, speech consists of concrete, and song of discrete, sounds; but sounds are sounds, whether concrete or discrete. Moreover, they are produced by the same instrument—the voice, and though in a somewhat different manner, yet according to the same laws; similar varieties of pitch, intensity, and even *timbre* resulting from its action on both, only resulting more frequently and rapidly on speech than on song.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VOCAL REGISTERS.

Varieties of vocal action.

SPEECH and song are results of the action of the same instrument, the voice. Every voice, whether in speaking or singing, can act in more ways or manners than one,—always in two ways, sometimes in three. The series of sounds severally thus produced in the same manner are sometimes called *registers*—a convenient, if not perfectly accurate, appellation. The extent or compass of these registers varies in different voices even of the same kind; indeed it is variable even in the same voice. That is to say, the manner of 'production' appropriate or 'natural' to the upper sounds of the first register can be applied to some of the lower sounds of the second, and *vice versâ*. Where the power of varying the production of these *border* notes is altogether wanting, or very limited, what is called among singers a *break* in the voice betrays itself, whenever the passage from one register to another has to be made at all rapidly. To what particular adjustments of the vocal apparatus these different productions are due is at present uncertain[1]. That

Registers.

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[1] See Marshall's 'Outlines of Physiology,' vol. i. p. 263.

they *are* different is easily to be ascertained, in his own person, by every one who can sing, or speak; for in this matter, as in so many others, the speaking voice resembles the singing. Two of these modes of production at least are *natural* to everybody. It is as natural to sing or to speak 'from the head' as 'from the chest [1];' but to use either mode *exclusively* is attended with great inconvenience and even some danger, and is therefore assuredly *un*natural. Yet this, it is certain, is what the majority of English people do. Not only so; for the most part they use all but exclusively that one of the two which is least fitted to do the most work —the second register, or 'head voice,' which, from its comparative feebleness and limited extent, would seem to have been provided by nature only as a supplement or relief to, because a change from, the first. In the ordinary transactions of life, in the dialogue or trialogue, or the 'personal talk' of a small circle, the disadvantages of this exclusive use of the weaker register are not much felt; and were they only

The 'head' and 'chest' voices.

Too exclusive use of the former.

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[1] These popular expressions, though open to some objection, represent a partial if not a whole truth. Whatever may be the varieties in the action of the vocal cords from which the qualities they represent may result, their 'sounding-board' in the one case *seems to be* the *head*, and in the other the *chest*. Whether the third register or *falsetto*—altogether wanting to many voices—is the result of a third mode of production, or of a slight modification of the second, is uncertain. Its consideration has little practical bearing on our subject—the *speaking* voice.

concerned, the matter would hardly be worth further consideration. But a habit, of speech or aught else, is not easily shaken off; or if shaken off, as it often is, suddenly, it is likely to be exchanged for a worse one. Quite ignorant of the facts just stated, generally without vocal discipline of any kind, an Englishman called upon to address a large assembly for the first time in his life, is all at once made aware that the vocal production to which he is habituated fails him utterly. He makes a variety of impromptu experiments in pitch and intensity, some of them ludicrous and all unsuccessful; and having soared to heights unsustainable by human throat and insupportable to human ear, he drops past that mean elevation at which alone he might have poised himself securely, and, plunging 'deeper than ever plummet sounded,' is lost in an incomprehensible growl.

Consequences.

But this is not all. The exclusive use of one, and that the weaker register, as indeed any other form of bad production of the voice, is attended not only with inconvenience—the inconvenience of being unpleasantly heard, or the greater one of not being heard at all—but 'even with some danger'—that of a chronic disorganization of the 'vocal mechanism.' We have all heard of 'clerical sore throat.' The expression is familiar and accepted. Everybody knows what it means. It is attributed to a variety of causes, most often to over-exertion of the vocal

Clerical sore throat

organs. Yet a very little consideration might show that this cause has, in most cases, no part in it whatever. For who, among the body whence it derives its particular appellation, are the principal sufferers from it? Those who are concerned in *daily* Services, or those whose public ministrations are for the most part limited to one day in the week? Notoriously the latter. Moreover, who ever heard of 'histrionic' or 'theatrical' sore-throat? It would be rash to assert that there is no such disorder, but assuredly there is no especial and accepted name for it. During how many days or hours in a year is the work of an actor in the fullest occupation interrupted by disorganization of his vocal powers? As a rule, not seldom, but never. Thus we are inevitably driven to two conclusions: (1) that clerical sore-throat is not generally (if ever) the mere result of over-exertion; and (2) that the majority of actors know how to produce their voices, and the majority of the clergy do not. Except therefore in those rare cases where the organization, laryngeal or pulmonary, is naturally so feeble as to render *any* exercise of the voice dangerous, clerical sore-throat would seem to be the result, not of too much exercise of the vocal mechanism, but of too little. This proposition, however, requires qualification.

not the result of over-use, but of misuse, of the voice.

Vocal production.

Impunity from throat disorders, for speaker or singer, depends ultimately on his method of speaking or singing—on the way in which he 'produces' his voice. One who has frequent occasion to tax his vocal powers more severely than in common conversation, be it in the reading-desk or the professorial chair, on the platform, or the floor of the House, will eventually do one of two things—fail utterly, or find out a mode of delivery which, even if imperfect, will be better than that of one whose opportunities of exercising his voice are fewer and further apart. Moreover, the frequent public speaker or reader *practises* of necessity more than the occasional one. True, his practice is carried on in the presence of the public; but if his method be good it will be little less efficacious on that account. Practice—*daily* practice—is the first and chief condition on which we can hope to improve in, or even keep our hold on, an *art;* for all arts involve physical exercise. How few are the *in*frequent or occasional speakers who, in the intervals of their public appearances, practise, or think of practising, in private! No musical performer who had ceased even for a few days to exercise his voice, or his hand, let his gifts or accomplishments be what they might, would dream of coming suddenly before an audience, large or small, till he had carefully tested the condition of the one or the other, and restored it to its normal state by the necessary discipline. It is only the speaker who can venture to dispense

Practice,

among musical performers.

with this,—with what result we know. Many a parish priest in Great Britain who, during six days in the week, rarely uses his voice with more than average conversational force, will unhesitatingly, on the seventh, read prayers two or even three times, and preach as often, in a large and crowded church. Can we wonder that he is so often the victim of chronic laryngeal inflammation? The art of speaking, like every other art, has to be maintained after it has been attained. It can only be maintained by unintermittent and judicious exercise.

But it is not merely as a means of escape from personal inconvenience that the cultivation and exercise of the speaking voice are to be recommended. They are aggressive as well as conservative agencies in the never-ending war against error and vice, so large a part in which has always been taken by oratory. A good production of voice will not only render speaking easier to him who has attained it, but plainer and more delightful to his hearers. Without it, every other good quality of speech will appear at a disadvantage. For other good qualities speech assuredly has—qualities which only a good production will set off to the greatest advantage, but which are not unfrequently found dissociated from it. It is not to be denied that many speakers to whom Nature has been anything but bountiful, and who have never availed themselves of the resources of Art to make amends for her shortcomings, do succeed in making themselves both audible and intelligible to large audiences. For a bad production of voice does not of necessity preclude, though it must add something to the difficulty of, distinct utterance. The voice itself may be deficient in strength, sweetness or variety, yet the syllables of which it is the vehicle may be clearly made out. The utterance of itself may have no charm; there may be 'no music in it;' we may hear without pleasure; but if we *do* hear and understand what is addressed to us, one, and that the chief, end of speech will have been attained. The *pabulum* may be altogether flavourless or even distasteful, but it will keep body and soul together.

CHAPTER V.

COMPASS.

CHAP. V.

SPEECH, as we have seen, differs from song in the undeterminateness of the sounds composing it; this undeterminateness resulting from the greater rapidity with which those sounds succeed one another, and, still more, from their being *concrete*, not *discrete*. To *speak*, therefore, in the proper sense of the word, 'on a given note,' or succession of notes forming part of any recognised scale, is simply impossible. A musical sound is, of necessity, a sustained sound, however brief its duration; and, in sustaining sounds, we do not speak but sing.

The speaking and singing voice.

It is more difficult therefore to ascertain and define the compass of a speaking than of a singing voice; yet it is certain that, as there is a pitch at about which, or (more properly) as there is a range within which, each of us can sing, so there is a range within which each of us can speak, most easily, most effectively, and for the longest time.

Their compass identical.

These ranges, whatever effect misuse of the vocal mechanism may have had upon them, should be, and in a perfectly natural or well-trained voice are, identical. We can, or should be able to, sing at any pitch at which we can speak, to speak at any pitch at which we can sing; and, moreover, to sing best at that pitch at which we can speak best, to speak best at that pitch at which we can sing best.

The middle of the voice to be most used.

In both speaker and singer the portion of the voice most often called into requisition, and therefore most important, is that which is farthest from its extremes. This truth has, time immemorial, been acknowledged in, and confirmed by, the practice both of the lyric and of the non-lyric stage. The 'unaccompanied' recitative of Italian opera which, as delivered by skilful Italian performers, approximates rather to speech than song, is, save in passages demanding exceptional energy, for the most part limited to the musical interval of a *fourth*[1]—notoriously a very small portion of a cultivated voice, which frequently extends over, and sometimes exceeds, two octaves. Again, the recognised theatrical expression 'level speaking,' though partially applicable to intensity as well as pitch, sufficiently indicates what is the theory and practice of good actors, by whom the power of 'level speaking' is regarded as one of the most precious, as it is

Level speaking.

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[1] The 'unaccompanied' recitative of *The Count* in Mozart's 'Nozze di Figaro' lies nearly all between F and B♭—notes lying nearest the middle of the barytone voice—the average or typical voice of man, the mean between the exceptional *tenore assoluto* and the equally exceptional *basso profondo.*

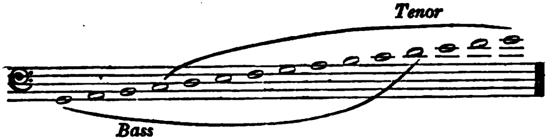
one of the rarest, of histrionic gifts and accomplishments[1].

Practice of musical sounds.

High excellence in speech has, without doubt, been attained by many who have had no skill in song. Nevertheless there is good reason for believing that, in the majority of cases, the surest and shortest way to the former would be found through the latter; and that the speaking voice would be best 'formed,' and soonest brought under control, by the practice of *musical* sounds. The first business then of the student of the art of *speaking* must be to ascertain what is the extreme compass of his *singing* voice.

Compass of male voices.

Even an uncultivated voice will generally be found to extend over at least twelve successive 'diatonic' sounds; those of a Bass voice ranging from about G to D, those of a Tenor from about C to G.



Of female.

The compass of the *female* voice is identical with that of the male, the sounds being however an octave higher; those of a Contralto ranging from G to D, those of a Soprano from C to G.

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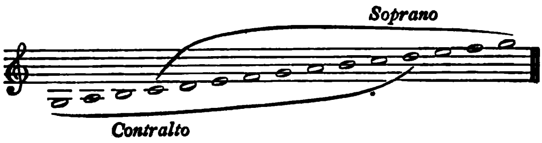
[1] An accomplished actress of the last generation, Mrs. Davison, spoke of it to the writer as the distinguishing characteristic of the elder Kean's delivery.

CHAP. V.



Every voice, whether in speaking or singing, can produce sound in more ways and manners than one. 'The series of sounds severally thus produced in the same manner are called *registers*.' As a rule, the first register consists of the first or lowest octave of a voice, the second of what remains above this. Thus the first register of the Bass ends at or about G, that of the Tenor at or about C[1].

Compass of the first register.

These registers are commonly easily distinguishable, both by the cultivated ear of the listener, and (which for the moment is more important) by the physical sensations of the vocalist. Not only have the sounds of the first register more volume, not only are they capable of greater intensity (though they are not necessarily always more intense) than those of the second, but in their production the tension of the vocal cords is sensibly increased, while a greater pressure of breath is manifestly exercised to set them in vibration.

de ?

'Whether of speaker or singer, the part of the voice most often to be called into requisition, and therefore most important, is that which is *farthest from its extremes*.' In the Bass voice this part will consist of the notes D E F G, in the Tenor of G A B C. One or other of these will be, to borrow a term from mediæval musical practice, the *dominant* note[1]—that note on which the vocalist can 'speak and sing with the best effect, with the greatest ease, and for the greatest length of time.' In the Bass voice this will probably be E or F, in the Tenor A or B—notes falling well within the first register of either voice. Control over these dominant notes then is the first thing to be attained.

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[1] These limits of course vary slightly in individual voices.

The dominant notes.

Example and precept.

'Every art is best taught by example;' and so difficult and delicate an art as that of 'forming the voice,' whether of speaker or singer, cannot safely be carried on long by mere precept. A few minutes *vivâ voce* illustration, given by a skilful teacher, will often avail more than many pages of written direction and explanation. Still, in the absence of such illustration, or as supplementary to it, direction and explanation may not be without their use, even in relation to matters so essentially practical as those before us.

Vocal discipline, when of use.

It must be premised that the discipline we are about to recommend, in common with physical discipline of whatever kind, cannot be undertaken with much hope of its being of use, by persons advanced in life[2], or (whatever their age) who cannot what is called 'tell one note from another.' The number of such persons, even in England, has always been small; it is now still smaller, and the apparent dulness of ear of a great many of these is simply the result of affectation. They 'cannot' because they will not.

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[1] The *dominant* is the reciting-note of plainsong, and under the old tonality the 'key-note,' so far as a key-note was possible.

[2] 'As life advances, and as the frame becomes more mature

Our directions for practice must be preceded by a few considerations on a matter of the first importance and essentially practical—respiration.

with all its structures complete and consolidated, susceptibility of material change diminishes, and actual gain in bodily power is comparatively uncertain and slow. But there is no period of active life in which a man may not safely profit by systematized exercise if judiciously pursued.' Maclaren's 'System of Physical Education.'

CHAPTER VI.

RESPIRATION.

A popular fallacy.

IT will be well to begin by disposing of a popular fallacy in relation to this subject,—that the vocalist (speaker or singer) should be always provided with a supply of 'breath' to meet all emergencies of performance or delivery. Such a supply there is no means of providing, nor is it needful that there should be any.

The vocal mechanism not furnished with a wind-chest.

In the first place, the human body is not furnished with any receptacle, like the 'wind-chest' of an organ or the 'bag' of a bagpipe, within which air can be kept in reserve for an indefinite time. The mechanism of the voice has little analogy with that of the first of these instruments. In some degree it resembles that of the harmonium, the bellows of which act almost directly on the vibrating tongues which are its chief sources of sound. More closely perhaps it resembles any ordinary wind-instrument—the oboe, for instance, which is silent, save under the immediate influence of the performer's breath.

And, secondly, vocal utterance is only one, and that not the most important, of the functions of respiration. The lungs are the primary motive power not only of the vocal mechanism but of the whole body. Respiration at frequent intervals is a condition of life itself; as indispensable to the Carthusian monk as to the Dominican preacher—to the vocalist silently counting his 'rests' as to him whose 'part' is unbroken by them.

Respiration needed not only for the vocal mechanism.

But though respiration, whether the voice be active or passive, must be made at intervals not infrequent, the conditions under which it has to be made are not in both cases the same. When the vocal mechanism is at rest, respiration is made *regularly;* the lungs are filled and emptied again at or at about equal intervals of time. But during speaking or singing this is not so: *in*spiration and *ex*piration must then (both of them) be regulated, in extent as well as in frequency, by the length and construction of the phrases, rhetorical or musical, or both, which have to be said or sung. Not only is the act of taking breath at certain intervals physically necessary, but when those intervals are dictated by the matter to be uttered, it may, *of itself*, become a powerful means of expression, and itself add largely to the force and clearness whether of oratory or song.

Different conditions under which respiration is to be made.

Respiration a means of expression.

The action of the lungs during speaking or singing would seem to differ from their action when the voice is at rest chiefly in this:—that in

Pace of respiration.

the latter condition (as we have seen) inspiration and expiration are made at, or nearly at, equal intervals of time; whereas in the former, *in*spiration should be made as quickly and *ex*piration as slowly as possible. The first of these acts, rapid inspiration, though demanding some care, is not hard of attainment; the second, deliberate and controlled expiration, is somewhat more so. Both will be rendered easier if we consider that the animal economy is as well cared for when expiration is the cause of sound as when it is not.

Silent expiration.

Every particle of air, therefore, which a speaker or singer (in action) exhales silently is wasted—is something taken from the force and volume and ease of his utterance. As the sound of the violin reaches the ear the instant the bow of the skilful violinist touches the string, so should that of the voice, at the instant expiration—the *bowing* of the vocalist—begins; no interval of time being left during which air may escape from the lungs without being turned to account in the production of sound. Many speakers and even singers disregard this; having taken breath, they give some of it out again *before* their utterance commences,—obviously with a loss of power.

Inspiration.

It is possible of course for a speaker or a singer to take breath too often, as well as not often enough. Of the two bad practices the latter is perhaps the most common; certainly it is the more disagreeable to the auditor. Sometimes it is the result simply of want of method or of thought. Sometimes, however, it is a rhetorical artifice, whereby the speaker strives to raise himself to an unwontedly high pitch of enthusiasm, or to convey to his auditors the impression that he has reached it. The utterance, generally rapid and acute, of a long paragraph during one expiration, inevitably brought to an end by a gasp, may, with him who originated the practice, have been, and therefore have seemed, unconscious; on the cultivated hearer of to-day it can have no other effect than that of a very clumsy, very transparent, and very vulgar trick.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VOCAL ELEMENTS.

CHAP. VII.

Vowels and consonants.

WORDS are made up of vowels and consonants. Though it be not without exception true that consonants have no individual phonetic existence, it is certain that vowels have; that consonants are practically initiatory, distributive, or interruptory only, indeed altogether dependent on vowels; and that of necessity therefore vowels are eminently the *sounds* of speech (consonants being rather the *noises*), and form the sole element of it which admits of any appreciable variety of pitch, duration, intensity, or *timbre.* As it is in the utterance of vowels alone that we can estimate the voice, whether of speaker or singer, so it must be through their instrumentality exclusively, in the first instance, that we can hope to develope its sweetness and strength, whether in speaking or singing.

The vowel *aa.*

Not only so: on one vowel only is the timbre of the human voice to be heard in its highest perfection—the vowel *a*, pronounced as in the English word 'father.' During the perfect utterance of this vowel, which, to distinguish it from *a* pronounced as in 'day,' we shall in future write as *aa*, the teeth will be at least sufficiently apart to admit of the insertion of a finger between them; the tongue will lie along the bottom of the mouth, its tip resting on the lower teeth, and forming a curve corresponding to that presented by the roof of the mouth. If the teeth be not sufficiently apart the *timbre* will want resonance and openness; if the tongue be not sufficiently advanced, or if it approach the roof of the mouth too nearly, it will also want purity—become guttural or nasal. This last imperfection may likewise be induced by extravagant retrocession of the corners of the mouth; the slight smile formed by the lips being tightened into a grin.

Recent physiological researches have justified the choice of *aa* not merely as the vowel on which the voice is heard to the greatest advantage, but also as that on which, with a view to its improvement, it should be most exercised.

Artificial production of vowels.

Professor Willis has shown that by setting a reed in vibration, and gradually elongating the tube which augments and governs its sounds, a series of sounds closely resembling in their timbre the vowels *e*, *a*, *aa*, *o*, *oo* is produced.

Natural.

In like manner the tube which augments and governs the vocal mechanism—the mouth—is, so to speak, elongated as the vowels are uttered in the above order; i. e. more and more of it is brought into operation,—*e* being formed at the back of the mouth, *oo* at the most advanced part of it, indeed by the lips almost exclusively; while *aa* proceeds from the centre, where the utmost resonance is possible.

o and *a*.

This discovery not only justifies the choice of *aa* as the vowel on which the voice should be most, and first, exercised, but suggests the order in which the practice of the other vowels should be taken up. As *aa* is formed in the central position of the oral tube, so are *o* and *a* in that nearest to it; the former involving the employment of more of the tube than the latter.

Utterance on the dominant notes.

Order.

To the utterance of these vowels on the *dominant* notes—those nearest to the middle of his voice,—now sustaining them, now attacking them suddenly and quitting them in like manner, at various degrees of intensity, the student should devote a good deal of time and his very best attention. He should begin with and often return to the practice of *aa;* begin with it because it is easiest, and return to it because experience has shown it to be the most useful. The practice of *aa* had best be followed by that of *o*, and that of *o* by that of *a*. *Oo* had better follow, and *e*, incomparably the most difficult, be attacked last. The maintenance of the proper adjustment of the variable cavity may be tested from time to time by the eye, with the aid of a looking-glass; and that of the pitch by occasional reference to a musical instrument; the ear of course being brought to bear on both.

The consonants.

These vowels may be preceded and followed in their utterance by the various consonants[1], of which the *dentals*, *labials*, and *liquids* (one excepted) will generally be found the most easy of formation, the *gutturals*, *sibilants*, and one of the *liquids* the most difficult. Individual peculiarities or confirmed bad habits, however, make it difficult or impossible to prescribe any rule or order for the practice of consonants. The student should carefully and critically test his power and readiness in the formation of these various adjuncts of speech, and practise those especially in which he finds himself weakest and slowest.

***s* and *r*.**

Those in which the majority of Englishmen fail are the sibilant *s*, and the liquid *r*; the former being frequently replaced by the lighter *th*, and the latter still more frequently by *w*, with or without a slight guttural. That a perfect formation of the sibilant is, save in very rare cases, possible to everybody, we believe. The lisp is commonly either an affectation or the result of carelessness. How far the formation of the liquid *r* (the result of a much more difficult and complex action) is possible in all cases, we are not in a condition to say. Perhaps the suppression of it by some may be due to the insistance on it by others. For to insist too pointedly on this liquid—to *roll* it—is certainly inelegant and indeed un-English, and to bridge over the hiatus formed by two following vowels by means of it, insufferably vulgar; but to drop it out of the phonetic alphabet, to ignore its existence, as it were, altogether, is gratuitously to make a sacrifice of one of the most important elements of language. Its absence from such words as *terror*, *horror*, *roar*, *crushing*, *rolling*, and innumerable others, will render the delivery of the most touching passage irresistibly ludicrous [1].

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[1] In the *order* of their formation there is an analogy between the consonants and vowels. As *e*, *a*, *aa*, *o*, and *oo* are formed in parts of the variable cavity successively more advanced (i. e. by successive elongations of the vocal tube) so are the consonants, the order of which is as follows:—*g* and *k* (gutturals); *d* and *t* (dentals); *v* and *f*, *b* and *p* (labials); *z* and *s* (sibilants). So with the liquids, of which *r* is formed by the most backward action, *l* by the next, *n* by the next, and *m* by the most forward; and so again with *gh* and *ch*, *dh* and *th*, *zh* and *sh*.

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Tables of vowels and consonants.

At the end of this volume are *tables*, in one or other of which will be found examples of the principal combinations of vowels and consonants used in the English language.

Long vowels.

No. 1 consists of words composed of *long* unmixed vowels, preceded and followed by every consonant, or combination of consonants, formed by a *single* action of the variable cavity.

Short vowels.

No. 2 consists of words composed of *short* unmixed vowels, preceded and followed by the same single or combined consonants.

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[1] There is really little to choose between

'I come to bu*w*y Cæsar, not to p*w*aise him,'

and the (in London especially) more common

'Being the right idea*r* of your father.'

Mixed vowels.

No. 3 consists of words composed of *mixed* vowels, preceded and followed again by the same single or combined consonants.

Double and triple consonants.

Nos. 4, 5, and 6 consist of words composed of long, short, and mixed vowels, preceded and followed by double and triple consonants.

Sustained sounds.

The vowel *aa*.

In its bearing on the cultivation of the voice, the practice of the sounds in No. 1 is, beyond all comparison, likely to be more efficacious than of those in any of the other tables. The long vowels admit of being sustained; and only by sustaining sounds can we hope to judge fairly of and, if need be, correct the 'production' of which they are the result. The syllables in the third column (those formed on *aa*) should be practised first *and most;* those in the first column (on *e*) last. The utterance of each syllable should be preceded by a rapid *in*spiration, and accompanied (or achieved) by as slow an *ex*piration as possible. No change whatever should be made in the position of any part of the variable cavity during the utterance of an unmixed vowel. The formation of the consonant, initial or final, should be all but instantaneous.

Short vowels.

The syllables in No. 2, on the contrary, are composed of vowels which do not admit of being sustained. Their perfect utterance therefore will be the result of a single effort, and their duration inconsiderable. On attempting to prolong any one of these syllables it will be found that its vowel is insensibly changed;—*ĭ, ĕ, ă* severally approximate to *ē, ā, āā*; and *ŏ* and *ŭ* assume a guttural or nasal *timbre.*

Mixed vowels.

The syllables in No. 3 (those in the first column excepted) are composed each of two vowels, one of which can be sustained, the other not. Thus of *ū=y̆ōō*, and *ou=aaoo*, the former vowel must be uttered rapidly, while the latter only can be sustained. After an instant, the vowel in *cue* will be indistinguishable from that in *coo*. Of *ī=āāĕ*, on the contrary, the former vowel only must be sustained, the latter being uttered rapidly, at the instant the syllable is brought to an end. So with *oi=āūĕ*, the prolongation of the latter vowel in which entirely disguises the character of the word of which it forms part.

The syllables formed of long and mixed vowels in Nos. 4, 5, and 6 admit of equal prolongation with those in No. 1. Those formed of short vowels are characterized rather by strength than sweetness, and owe most of their effect to the energy and clearness with which the consonants of which they are so largely composed are uttered. In such words as *prism, ledge, month,* the noise of the successive consonants all but overpowers the transient sound of the single vowel. The last letters in the plural *months* are perhaps the most difficult of utterance in the English language. The word is commonly pronounced *munce.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND REGISTER.

The second register.

Its compass,

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and quality.

ALTHOUGH, from its greater volume, compass, and possible intensity, the first or lower register is that on which the principal burthen of speech (as of song) should be cast, the second may be made a very valuable adjunct to it, as well in varying the quality and extending the compass of the voice, as in lessening the fatigue of the vocalist. The second register generally begins, as we have seen, with the second or upper octave. From about G in the Bass voice, and C in the Tenor, the sounds, as compared with those of the first register, are produced or producible with a slighter tension of the vocal cords and a smaller expenditure of breath. Quite irrespective of their pitch, too, they are also distinguishable from them by a thinner and generally somewhat brighter quality.

The student, having obtained some control over his first register, through the practice already prescribed, will proceed to the cultivation of the second, by the recitation (as before) of vowels and consonants (in similar order), on the lower notes of it; in the Bass voice on A, B, and C, in the Tenor on D, E, and F. This practice need not (nor should it) be carried on very long. The second register, as we have already said, is not adapted for continued exclusive use; and the probabilities are that the student has already exercised it, involuntarily, too much—thus adding to the difficulty (one of the greatest the *singer* has to deal with) of making the transition from one register to the other without an apparent 'break.'

Border notes.

It has been shown that the 'productions' natural and generally appropriate to the two registers may be partially interchanged; i. e. that the adjustment of the vocal mechanism natural to the first may be applied to some of the sounds of the second, and *vice versâ.* In every voice there is a point at which this interchange can most easily be made—one note at least which can be produced without difficulty, either 'from the chest' or 'from the head,' at will. This will probably be the upper note of the first octave—G in the Bass voice, and C in the Tenor. Above and below these, however, two, three, or more notes will generally be found susceptible of this variety or interchange of production. The student will apply to these notes, beginning with that particular one to which they are most easily applied, first one production, then the other, using the vowels and consonants as before. In the application of the 'chest' production to the notes of the second register—virtually in extending the compass of the first—he will find it necessary to bring a greater pressure of breath upon them than before. On the other hand, in the application of the 'head' production to the notes of the first register, he will find a lesser pressure of breath sufficient.

Intonation of verse and prose.

Having attained a certain control over his voice in the utterance of isolated vowels, preceded and followed by the various consonants (as exhibited in Tables, 1, 2, &c.), the student will be in some degree prepared to deal with the same vowels and consonants as they present themselves in composition. Selecting the most euphonious passages of verse and prose he can find, he should recite or 'intone' them with various degrees of intensity, first on one then on another of his *dominant* notes, always applying, whatever the degree of intensity, the method of production natural to them as notes of the first register.

CHAPTER IX.

SPEECH.

THE exercises so far recommended, though devised with exclusive reference to the 'formation' of the *speaking* voice, are essentially *musical* exercises—exercises carried on exclusively through the utterance of musical or isochronous sounds. Carefully and patiently undergone, they will of necessity have so increased the student's control over his 'vocal mechanism,' and so familiarized him with its natural peculiarities, good or bad,—moreover, they will have so increased the delicacy and quickness of his ear,—that his next step, great and important as it is, will be comparatively an easy one.

Speech within a limit.

Recitation at a given and ascertainable pitch—not with us an end, but a means—has now to be exchanged for recitation which, employing that rapidly succeeding variety of pitch in which speech differs so widely from song, employs it *within a certain limit,* the centre or point of departure of which must be one of those *dominant* notes with which the student's *monotonous* practice should by this time have thoroughly

Notation of speech.

familiarized him. For this exercise none but the most general directions can be written. Attempts have been repeatedly made to *note* the inflections of the speaking voice; but they have necessarily proved altogether unavailing in reference to sounds so vague and so fleeting. Possibly something akin to the *neuma* notation[1] of the middle ages might be devised which would serve to *remind* the reader—as that did the singer—of inflections with which he had already been made acquainted. But it is idle to hope for a notation which should enable two skilled speakers—as musical notation will enable two skilled singers—to declaim without previous concert a given passage with the selfsame varieties of time and tune. In the one case these varieties are, though numerous, limited; in the other they are infinite. The task of the reader therefore must always be, in one respect at least, far more difficult than that of the singer. For the latter, every inflection—the time and tune of every syllable—is fixed by the composer; the former must invent as well as execute the music by which he seeks to convey to others the meaning of his author.

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[1] This notation, which prevailed throughout musical Europe from the seventh to the eleventh century, is considered by the best and most recent authority, M. Coussemaker, of Lille, to have had its origin in the three *accents* of speech, the acute, grave, and circumflex. Its aim obviously was to represent not merely sounds, but transitions also from one sound to another—i. e. *concrete* as well as *discrete* melody. Every trace of this aim has disappeared from modern notation. The *portamento*, the only *concrete* effect left in modern music, is without any adequate symbol. See Coussemaker's 'Histoire de l'Harmonie au Moyen Age,' Notation, ch. ii. p. 158.

A very little experiment will enable the student who has gone carefully through the exercises we have prescribed for him to ascertain the particular range within which he can speak or should be able to speak 'most effectively, most easily, and for the longest time.' Having done this it should be his endeavour to keep within this range, not only during his especial practice, but whenever he may have occasion to utter vocables. In this respect, be it observed, the speaker has an advantage over the singer. The practice of the latter must be restricted to particular occasions and particular localities; that of the former can be carried on at almost any time, or anywhere. Singing is no part of the ordinary business of life; speaking is an indispensable part of it.

Advantages of the speaker.

The first attempts of the student to speak at the pitch natural, though not necessarily habitual to him—from the right place and in the right manner—will probably be not unattended with difficulty in more ways than one. If his habitual 'production' be bad, the substitution for it of a good one can never be easy; if his habitual 'range' be ill chosen, he will with difficulty keep out of it: nor will he get much help or encouragement from others. Our friends are apt to be puzzled and put out by any change, even

His difficulties.

for the better, in our look, tone, or bearing. Supposing, as is more than probable, that he has hitherto used all but exclusively the second or upper register of his voice, his first attempts to use the first or lower—his *natural* voice—will seem anything but natural; his physical sensations even will be somewhat troublesome to himself, and his *timbre*, assuredly, being new and unaccustomed, will be unpleasing to others. Not till it is familiar will any way of doing anything seem quite the right way. Only on the ripe scholar does scholarship sit easily and gracefully.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

CHAP. X.

Oratorical detail.

SO far we have left unnoticed all questions of what may be called oratorical detail. The dots to the *i*'s, and the crosses to the *t*'s are essential parts of handwriting: nevertheless, if the letters to which they are ever so scrupulously adjoined are ill formed, the handwriting will be none the less illegible or unseemly. Our business has been with the voice itself, the instrument which, unlike the player, neither speaker nor singer can ever exchange for another;—to see what could be done to improve it and bring it under control; to set our pipes and strings in order before trying to make music out of them. Moreover, many of these questions of detail have been repeatedly discussed elsewhere. In innumerable books on 'elocution,' 'reading,' 'speech,' and the like, common faults or negligences in pronunciation have been indicated, and causes assigned and remedies suggested for various forms of ineffective utterance. We have tried to show how to deal with that which underlies all these faults or negligences—that misuse of the vocal mechanism called among singers 'bad production.' But in respect to several of these questions—of detail no less than of principle—our views differ essentially from those which are sometimes put forward; and we shall call attention to some of these, rather as supplementary to, than forming any integral part of, this essay.

A popular maxim.

If there be any maxim more frequently or more urgently commended to young readers and speakers than another, it is this:—'Take care of the consonants, the vowels will take care of themselves.' Like many other maxims this contains not merely that 'mixture of a lie' which Lord Bacon tells us 'doth ever add pleasure,' but so large a mixture of it as almost to neutralize whatever truth it may contain. Take care of the consonants by all means; they are the *bones* of speech: but take none the less care of the vowels, for they are its flesh and blood, without which consonants are but dry bones—void of beauty as of life. It is, perhaps, to the latter part of this maxim that we are indebted for the cruel treatment vowels sometimes receive at the hands (i. e. the mouths) of a large number of readers and speakers—e. g. in the substitution of *sich* for *such*, *git* for *get*, *und* for *and*, *fur* for *for*, and the like; while to the former we possibly owe the interposition (already alluded to) of the letter *r* between two vowels, so eminently characteristic of cockney breeding, as in *Maidarill* (for Maida Hill)—not unpardonable in an omnibus conductor, and *Victoriarour Queen*—quite unpardonable in an educated gentleman.

Another.

Another of these maxims or recommendations is 'always to raise the voice at the end of a sentence.' Musical terms are employed so loosely in ordinary writing and speaking, that the meaning and intention of those who employ them are often hard to come at. 'Raise' may here refer to elevation of pitch, to addition of intensity, or to both. If it refer to elevation of pitch, the result of adopting the recommendation would be to give to the end of every sentence the effect of a question—an effect too ludicrous to be seriously considered. If, on the other hand, it refer to addition of intensity, the recommendation may be worthy of consideration—in so far as, but no farther than, it may tend to correct the bad habit of ending a sentence with an exhausted breath. Most sentences, if they are to be made intelligible, must be ended, not by a rise, but by a fall, in pitch; but if this fall be accompanied by decreased intensity, there will be danger of the last few syllables (often the keys to many foregoing ones) not reaching the auditory at all.

Pitch and intensity.

The average pitch and intensity of a speaker's voice, as well as the pace of his utterance, must be regulated not only by his powers and convenience—considerations which cannot be ignored—but also by the size and shape of the place in which he is called upon to use it.

Auditorium.

Every auditorium has a voice of its own ; or, to speak more precisely, has powers of augmenting and enriching some sounds and confusing others. This latent voice a speaker who is both gifted and skilful will in a moment find means of turning to account. To him it will be what the sounding-board is to the string stretched over it, the pipe to the reed to which it is attached—a means whereby to increase the sonority of his own organ. To the gifted and *un*skilful speaker—the speaker with a musical voice which he knows not how to manage—it will be a source of perpetual embarrassment. Much of the so-called 'indistinctness' of speakers with powerful voices is due no doubt to their not forming their syllables perfectly, but much more to their not knowing how to adapt their pitch, pace and intensity to their auditorium. In a locale new to him, the speaker should carefully observe the effect of his voice when he begins to speak, and raise or lower his pitch—i. e. tune his voice—accordingly. Practice will reduce the necessity for this to a minimum. An observant and frequent speaker may soon learn how to adopt his intonation to his auditorium merely by looking at it.

Slow utterance.

In rooms which have much reverberative power, utterance must be slow if it is to be intelligible. This of course adds another to the many difficulties of public speaking—especially of extemporaneous speaking. When the speaker is warmed by his subject, when thoughts and illustrations crowd upon him, when, in short, he is at his best, he needs great self-control to resist the tendency to accelerated pace. If this accelerated pace be accompanied (as is probable) by greater elevation of pitch[1] and increased intensity, he is likely to become partially or even wholly unintelligible. For audibility and intelligibility are not necessarily convertible terms. True, a speaker cannot be understood unless he is heard; but he may be heard—and most painfully—without being at all understood, be his thoughts never so clear, his words never so well chosen.

Audibility and intelligibility.

> 'Vegnati voglia di trarreti avanti,'

says Dante to the lady whom he has *heard* singing in the forest of the Terrestrial Paradise,

> 'verso questa riviera
> Tanto ch'io possa *intender* che tu canti.'

The intensity of speech must and will, if there be any life in it, vary very considerably. So must its pace.

The *crescendo* and *accelerando* are as valuable and as legitimate artifices in oratory as they are in music; but it is dangerous to prolong excessively either the *fortissimo* or the *prestissimo*, to which they severally lead. *Loud* and *fast* are but comparative terms, and the ear soon becomes insensible to either force or velocity, unless they are frequently contrasted with their opposites. Moreover, both have their especial dangers. Force, as we have seen, is apt to interfere with distinctness of utterance, by over stimulating the resonant properties of the auditorium; and volubility, unless the speaker be very exceptionally gifted, is rarely used without very considerable sacrifice being made to its exigencies,—short vowels substituted for long ones, consonants clipped here and dropped there, and more than all that huddling together or *skewering* of words with which foreigners so often and so justly reproach us.

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[1] The difficulty of resisting this apparently universal tendency —as old, it might seem, as oratory itself—was met by the ancients by stationing a musical performer near the speaker, who from time to time reminded him of his normal pitch. The instrument used by the Romans, a species of flute, had an especial name—*tonorium*. Quintilian, lib i. c. 12.

Force and velocity.

Every language has its own difficulties of utterance: English, assuredly, neither the fewest nor the least. None, for instance, abounds more in words which differ to the eye, and, as commonly pronounced, not to the ear. The natives of some parts of Great Britain still distinguish by a slight guttural sound such words as *which* from *witch*, *whether* from *weather*, &c.[1]: but the practice is provincial and would sit awkwardly on one not 'to the manner born,' who adopted it on principle. The sense of such equivocal words, too, can generally be gathered from the context, provided they be distinctly uttered, on

Special difficulties of English speech.

Equivocal words.

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[1] One familiar passage seems especially to demand the distinction here referred to,—'submitting ourselves *wholly* to His *holy* will and pleasure.'

whatever system of utterance. It is most undesirable, however, to add to their number by assimilating to the ear such words as *bridal* and *bridle*, *principal* and *principle*, about the propriety of distinguishing which there cannot be two opinions.

The aspirate.

In our tables of English monosyllables examples of those beginning with the letter *h* are of course given. This is not one of the letters the utterance or omission of which, in an isolated word on which attention is concentrated, presents any difficulty of itself—as in the cases of *r* or *s*. The omission of the aspirate is a far more common fault than its gratuitous interposition. The latter is exclusively confined to the vulgar; while the former is anything but rare among persons of considerable culture whose early years have been passed in certain parts of Great Britain, and who are themselves often perfectly aware of their own infirmity—only remediable by the most constant watchfulness. But there is a far more widely-spread though less noticeable slovenliness in this matter, against which even the most refined speakers need to be always on their guard. It shows itself mostly in short syllables especially in immediate juxtaposition. Thus 'he who,' rapidly uttered, too often becomes *heoo;* and 'he of whom,' *he ovoom.* Even when attention is especially directed to it, the formation of two or three successive aspirates is, it must be admitted, not easy;—e. g. in *to have had*, or *which have had.* As the difficulty attendant on these combinations of letters chiefly presents itself in continuous discourse, it is only by extreme watchfulness herein that it can be overcome. The aspirate has more affinity with the first register of the voice than the second. Thus on any one of the 'border' notes it will be found easier to utter *hold* from the chest than *old;* and *vice versâ.*

Commencement of a speech.

Nothing seizes the attention of an audience like a gentle commencement. As an oratorical artifice it is perhaps as old as oratory itself. What is an artifice for a rich voice is no doubt a necessity for a poor one. But necessity, in the oldest of the arts, architecture, has been the parent of a thousand beauties; it is not without its advantages in oratory. Curiosity is piqued by the obscure, whether to the ear or to the eye. Attention once fairly seized does not easily or lightly set itself free. In the presence of a speaker the feebleness of whose voice is in inverse ratio to that of his intellect, even the seemingly irrepressible noises of a large public assembly are marvellously kept in check. To maintain this stillness the discourse itself must be interesting—

> 'And woven close, both matter, form and style.'

An audience cannot be expected to make, still less to sustain, an effort for nothing; and following a long-continued *pianissimo* is an effort—like reading with insufficient light, or making one's way in a mist—which few speakers can safely venture to inflict on their hearers.

We will only add a few words on one or two matters of subordinate though still considerable importance.

Action.

Whatever control we may acquire over our voices, of themselves, we shall never turn them to the best account till we have attained also considerable control over the rest of our bodies. In this Englishmen are singularly deficient, if not by nature, by art, which is second nature. Granted that action, not suggesting itself to the average Englishman as essential or even becoming to his every-day talk, is somewhat startling—has an air of unreality or affectation—when made an accompaniment to English oratory; surely that does not justify our public utterances being disfigured, as they often are, by a thousand awkward and ridiculous tricks. If profound and original thought, expressed in well-chosen and well-sounding words, tells most on an English audience when these words issue from a frame which betrays no more sympathy or connection with them than does the case of a pianoforte with the music of which it is the medium,—be it so. The Englishman is a reticent, undemonstrative creature, not predisposed even to vocal expression, and decidedly indisposed to pantomimic. No doubt:

English varieties of action.

—then let him stand still when he speaks. But this he never succeeds in doing. One English orator will enforce his arguments by pommeling at frequent intervals the table, desk, handrail, or aught else within his reach; another cannot put forth half-a-dozen coherent sentences without sawing himself backwards and forwards, like the mast of a yacht at anchor; another folds his arms over his chest[1]—one of the most unfavourable postures for vocal utterance into which the human body can be thrown; while another, having tried a variety of ways of suiting the action to the word, frankly admits his failure by putting the means of action—his hands—into his pockets. Experienced actors, however, say that few things in the exercise of their calling are so difficult as this same standing still. Graceful inaction therefore would seem to be another added to the long list of the orator's *accomplishments*, and no more likely to 'come by nature' than graceful action.

Inaction.

Posture.

Supposing, however, that the speaker or reader wishes to maintain, and can maintain, any given posture for any given time, it is important that that posture be well chosen. The effect of what he says or reads will be greatly influenced by it. One who speaks extempore or from memory can of course choose his posture; not so one who reads. His book or manuscript must generally rest on a desk or table; and this is often below his level of vision. Hence he is compelled either to keep his head inclined downwards, or alternately to lower and raise it—like a bird in the act of drinking. The remedy for this inconvenience would seem to be the simplest possible; nevertheless the majority of readers put up with it, unaware perhaps of the extent to which it obscures their utterance. For the slightest acquaintance with the variable cavity would show that hardly any part of it can properly do its work when the head is bent over the chest. For large volumes desks are of course indispensable. They might, however, generally be so set up as to save the reader from stooping. Small volumes and manuscripts—sermons, for instance—would be better held in the hand; best of all, in the head.

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[1] A good many of these practices are traditional—both in 'the House' and on the stage. Mr. Pitt is said to have adopted this particular attitude habitually; and Goldsmith's Strolling Player tells us, 'In general I kept my arms folded up thus upon the pit of my stomach; it is the way at Drury Lane, and has always a fine effect.' Essays, No. xxi.

Embarassing changes of posture.

Many speakers depart from the rule and habit of immobility, in a way embarrassing to their hearers, by addressing themselves alternately to those on the right and those on the left of them. From this action both these parties are equal sufferers. Neither can ever hear two consecutive short sentences or the whole of one long one. We have even seen a speaker turn his head fairly away from those in front of him and address himself exclusively to those behind him. No speaker should be called upon to address those whom he cannot see without changing his range of vision, which is almost always identical with his range of voice. If unfortunately there are would-be auditors considerably to the right and left, he had best ignore their presence, and address himself exclusively to those in front of him. It is better to be heard perfectly by many, and not at all by a few, than imperfectly by all.

Hearers.

One word in conclusion,—not about speakers, but hearers. The latter, often no doubt unconsciously, accompany public speaking by noises, individually slight, but which, added together, are a source of constant embarrassment and pardonable irritation to the former. The most serious of these is coughing,—in most cases a mere trick. Neither elevation of pitch nor increase of intensity have any chance against this; indeed, as they in some degree cover so do they generally encourage it. Depression and decrease of pitch and intensity, on the contrary, expose and will therefore often stop it. Should these fail, a sudden, complete, and long-continued pause is an unfailing, as it should be a last, resource, and will silence even the most nervous and asthmatic of hearers.

TABLE NO. I.—*Long Vowels preceded and followed by Single Consonants.*

Consonants.			ē		ā		āā		ō		ōō	
Labials.	p	Mute.	peat	leap	pay	ape	palm	gape	pole	hope	pool	loop
	b		beat	glebe	bay	babe	balm		bowl	lobe	boom	
	f	Hissing.	fear	leaf	fane	safe	fath-er	half	foal	oaf	fool	hoof
	v		veer	leave	vane	save	vast	halve	vote	cove		move
Dentals.	t	Mute.	teal	meat	tale	late	taunt	can't	tome	boat	too	root
	d		deal	meed	dale	lade	daunt	command	dome	bode	do	rude
	th	Lisping.	theme	teeth	thane	faith		path		loth		tooth
	dh		thee	teethe	they	lathe		fath-er	though	loathe		booth
	s	Hissing.	seal	lease	sane	dace	salve	lass	soak	dose	soothe	goose
	z		zeal	lees	za-ny	days	huz-za	alms	zone	doze	zoo-phite	ooze
	sh	Aspir-ated.	she	leash	shape				show		shoe	
	zh											u-sual
Gutturals.	k		key	leak	cate	ache	calm		coat	oak	coo	book
	g		gear	league	gate	vague	gape		goat	vogue	gouge	
	ch	Aspir-ated.	cheer	leech	chair		chal-dron		choke	coach	choose	
	gh		jeer	liege	jail	age	jaunt		joke	doge	jews	gouge
Nasals.	m	Liquids.	meed	deem	may	fame	master	calm	mow	home	moon	boom
	n		need	dean	nay	fane			no	hone	noon	boon
	l		lead	eel	lay	ale	laugh		low	pole	loo	pool
	r		read	ear	ray	air	ra-ther	far	row	pore	rue	poor
	y		ye		yea				yoke		you	
	w		we		way				woke		woo	
	h		he		hay		half		hoe		who	

TABLE NO. II.—*Short Vowels preceded and followed by Single Consonants.*

Consonants.			ĭ		ĕ		ă		ŏ		ŭ	
Labials.	p	Mute.	pin	hip	pet	step	pan	nap	pod	top	pun	up
	b		bin	fib	bet	web	ban	nab	boss	knob	bun	tub
	f	Hissing.	fin	if	fell	clef	fan	gaff	fog	off	fun	puff
	v		vin-tage	live	vex	nev-er	van	have	vol-ley	of	ver-min	love
Dentals.	t	Mute.	tip	sit	tell	bet	tack	bat	top	not	tun	but
	d		dip	lid	dell	bed	dab	bad	dot	nod	dun	bud
	th	Lisping.	thin	with	theft	death	thank	hath	thorough	moth	thud	doth
	dh		this	whith-er	then	teth-er	than	lath-er	though	both-er	thus	oth-er
	s	Hissing.	sink	miss	set	less	sad	ass	sod	boss	sup	us
	z		zink	fizz	zest	hes-i-tate		as		was		buzz
	sh	Aspir-ated.	ship	dish	shell	mesh	shall	mash	shod	wash	shut	hush
	zh								eva-sion			
Gutturals.	k		kill	wick	ken	beck	cat	hack	cot	lock	cut	tuck
	g		gig	wig	get	beg	gat	hag	got	log	gut	tug
	ch	Aspir-ated.	chip	ditch	chess	fetch	chat	batch	chop	botch	chub	much
	gh		gill	ridge	jess	ledge	jam	badge	jot	lodge	jut	nudge
Nasals.	m	Liquids.	mid	him	met	them	mat	lamb	mob	Tom	mud	sum
	n		nib	in	net	then	gnat	man	knob	on	nut	sun
	l		lick	ill	led	bell	lap	shall	lot	doll	lug	gull
	r		rick		red	ber-ry	rap	bar-ren	rot	for	rug	fur
	y				yet		yam		yon		yuck	
	w		will		wet		wag		wan			
	h		hit		head		hap		hot		hull	

TABLE NO. III.—*Impure or Mixed Vowels preceded and followed by Single Consonants.*

Consonants.			āū		ōī		ī		ū		ōū	
Labials.	p	Mute.	pall		poise		pie	type	pew	dupe	pout	
	b		ball	daub	boy		by	gibe	buhl	tube	bout	
	f	Hissing.	fault		foil	coif	fie	life	few		foul	
	v		vault		void		vie	dive	view		vow	
Dentals.	t	Mute.	taw	aught	toy	quoit	tie	site	tube	newt	town	out
	d		daw	awed	doit	void	die	side	dew	lewd	down	cowed
	th	Lisping.	thaw				thigh	mythe	thew		thou-sand	mouth
	dh						thy	lithe			thou	mouthe
	s	Hissing.	saw		soil	voice	sigh	ice	sue	use	sow	house
	z			cause		toys		size		use		house
	sh	Aspir-ated.	shawl				shy				shower	
	zh											
Gutturals.	k		cause	talk	coil		kite	like	cue	duke	cow	
	g		gauze				guile		gew-gaw	fugue	gout	
	ch	Aspir-ated.	chaw	de-bauch	voice		chime				chouse	pouch
	gh		jaw		joy		gibe	oblige	jew	huge	jowl	
Nasals.	m	Liquids.	maw	shawm	moil		my	time	mute	fume	mouth	
	n		gnaw	dawn	noise	coin	nigh	wine	new	tune	now	town
	l		law	wall	al-loy	oil	bye	vile	lute	yule	loud	owl
	r		raw	war	roy-al	choir	rye	wire		pure	rout	our
	y		yawn						yule			
	w		wall				wine					
	h		haw		hoy		high		hue		how	

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